

SECRET

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Jat from pub: 140014-1*

SUBJECT: US Policy Regarding Release of the Hostages

1. I would like to pose the pros and cons of an active vs. a passive US policy regarding expedited release of the hostages (if any of them is injured, missing, or dead) a little more sharply than today's Task Force memo did, since I tend to believe the benefits of an active policy outweigh the risks.

A. Active Policy. Protest in extremely strong terms the injury/unaccountability/death and appeal on humanitarian grounds that the remainder of the hostages (alternatively at least the ones suffering permanent psychological damage) be released immediately. (This can be cast in terms not of blaming Bani-Sadr et al. per se, but of being forced to hold the GOI responsible.)

Pro

- Bani-Sadr, Khomeini, and the Revolutionary Council may respond to humanitarian argument. US (and international) pressure gives them something specific to respond to in urging expedited release—i.e., how can they be "out in front" on the necessity for speedy release if there is only muted US reaction?
- World opinion may be heavily swayed toward the US.
- Exploits one of the few "levers" we have had since the initial international outrage when the diplomats were first seized. International opprobrium dissipates over time; we either take advantage of it when the issue becomes public or we forever write off using it.

- Maintains release momentum, which preempts the possibility of the militants reversing themselves.

Con

- Militants will argue that complaints are a US trick.
- Militants might react by attacking hostages once again. (This could always happen even if the US adopts a low profile, however.)

B. Low Profile. Restraint in USG policy in order to allow the Tehran scenario to play itself out; i.e., don't derail favorable developments.

Pro

- Iranians move at their own pace to remove hostages; hostages are not endangered.

Con

- Hostage release may be delayed indefinitely.
- Domestic political pressure. Negative reaction of US hostage families.